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are an easy,
classic NC holiday
treat 1C



Veterans demand answers about Army experiments

BY MARTHA QUILLIN
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Decades after the U.S. Army used soldiers to test the effects of potent chemical and biological warfare agents – including some prohibited by the Geneva Protocol – it has begun notifying veterans that they may be eligible for government-paid medical care for related injuries and illnesses.

But the Army still has not revealed to individual veterans what substances they were exposed to during the tests. A veterans advocacy group says the government is refusing to use its own databases to track down eligible veterans. “The Army is continuing to bargain in bad faith,” said Rick Weidman, executive director for policy and government affairs for Vietnam Veterans of America, a national veterans advoca-

cy group that sued the government over the way it has treated the testing subjects. “They did all this stuff in secret, so there are no public lists as to who underwent these experiments. But they know who it was, in virtually all cases. They also have the capability of going to the Veterans Administration and to the Social Security Administration and easily finding everybody who went through the experiments. But

they’re not doing it. And they’re not willing to say what people were exposed to, under the guise that it’s a matter of national security. “It’s not,” Weidman said. “Embarrassment is not national security.” The Army began mailing notices this month to veterans who were exposed to a range of potential chemical and biological weapons during tests conducted between 1942 and 1975.

A spokeswoman for U.S. Army Medical Command, which announced that the mailings had begun, did not immediately respond to emailed questions about whether the government is fulfilling court orders to notify eligible veterans. To be eligible for medical care under the program, veterans must have:

- A Department of Defense Form 214 or a War Department discharge separation form or the equivalent.
- Served as a medical research subject between 1942 and 1975.
- A diagnosed medical condition they believe to be a direct result of their participation in a U.S. Army biochemical testing program.

SEE EXPERIMENTS, 5A

NCDMV: Please don’t wait to get your Real ID

BY RICHARD STRADLING
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RALEIGH
As publicity stunts go, this one was pretty low-key. State Board of Transportation member Allen Moran went to his local DMV office in Nags Head two days before Thanksgiving to get his Real ID, a form of driver’s license that meets stricter federal identification standards that go into effect in October 2020. The press was notified and invited to come along, as they will be when transportation board members across the state go to their local DMV offices to get Real IDs in the coming weeks. The Division of Motor Vehicles has no money to market the Real ID, so it is looking to low-cost strategies like this to get the word out. DMV Commissioner Torre Jessup says he expects as many as 4 million North Carolinians will want a Real ID before October 2020, and he fears too many of them will wait until the last minute to come in. “We need people to come in now,” Jessup said at a Board of Transportation meeting this month. “If we set out to achieve a goal of getting every driver’s license holder a Real ID by this deadline, we’re talking about 220,000 additional people coming through our offices each month. We can’t handle that with our current infrastructure, and we definitely can’t handle it if everybody waits until the last minute. And it would be a disaster. So we’ve got to start now.” The Real ID looks and works like a driver’s license or state-issued ID, except that it has a gold star in the upper right-hand corner. The star indicates that

SEE REAL ID, 5A



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Christmas trees are on sale at the Raleigh Farmers Market. The leader of the N.C. Christmas Tree Association says the supply of Fraser firs is limited. Farmers planted fewer trees in 2008 because of the recession, and those trees now are hitting the market.

Fraser firs in short supply this holiday, tree sellers say

BY CAMILA MOLINA
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Christmas tree growers and sellers are advising consumers to get their Christmas tree early this year and to not be surprised if the cost is higher than normal. “The tree shortage is real, that’s for sure,” said Luke Gross, who sells Christmas trees at the Raleigh

Farmers Market.

North Carolina’s official Christmas tree, the Fraser fir, is in limited supply, the director of the North Carolina Christmas Tree Association told The Associated Press. North Carolina is the second-largest grower and exporter of Christmas trees. The state produces more than 20 percent of the

country’s supply. The recession affected tree farmers nationwide when there was less demand for Christmas trees. As a consequence, farmers did not plant as many trees in 2008, The Charlotte Observer reported. Almost a decade later, those trees are now on the market, but fewer of them are available at a time when more people are trying to buy trees, the report said. National Christmas Tree Association spokesman Doug Hundley told the AP that it takes about 10 years for trees to reach full height. “We’re just catching up to that now,” Gross said.

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